



ASK EPA!!

Questions and Answers about Asbestos and EPA's Investigation

Q: Why does EPA clean up vacant properties instead of concentrating on occupied homes and businesses?

A: EPA does not *target* vacant properties but has cleaned up several of them. The number of vacant properties cleaned up is extremely small compared to the number of properties that were not vacant when cleaned. Many of the properties considered vacant were only temporarily vacant, such as rentals.

Although EPA does not target vacant properties, properties are not removed from the schedule because they are vacant. Reasons for cleaning vacant properties include:

- it makes economic sense to address them if they are vacant
- there are no residents to relocate (cost and resident convenience)
- owners may be in the process of renovation which means less preparation work and less restoration for EPA because the home owner has already made arrangements
- once EPA has completed the meetings, detailed designs and other pre-work to prepare any property for cleanup, it is costly to take it out of the schedule and change plans.

Another reason EPA has cleaned vacant properties is that the property was located next to or very near another scheduled cleanup — sometimes with the same owner. Several vacant property cleanups in 2003 were initial cleanups with very high levels of contamination.

In the past people have criticized EPA for NOT cleaning up vacant properties. They argued, correctly, that occupied properties are more time consuming and expensive to clean for the reasons mentioned above.

As EPA moves toward more of a geographic basis for scheduling cleanups the incidence of vacant property cleanups may increase or decrease depending on the block of homes. Avoiding the vacant homes, and returning to them later, defeats the purpose of moving to a geographic basis in the first place. Please review EPA's method for selecting properties to cleanup. It was printed as a Q&A in local newspapers on Sept. 8, 2004. It is also available at EPA's Information Center at 501 Mineral Ave. or on EPA's web site at: www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby

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